

Applicants respectfully request the review and approval of the proposed drawing change appended to the response filed 11 February 2002.

Claims 1, 6–10, 12 and 15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being unpatentable over Mouissie and claims 2–5, 11 and 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mouissie in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,019,521 to Manning et al. (Manning). These rejections are respectfully traversed for at least the following reasons.

Independent claims 1 and 11 recite combinations of features that each include “a pair of first projections each extending parallel to the plane and each having a first end spaced from a second end, each first end being fixed to a first one of the male and female members, and each second end being resiliently movable with respect to the first member.” Claim 1 further recites that the second end of the first member cooperatively engages a groove of a second member “such that the first member is centered about the axis with respect to the second member.” Claim 11 further recites that the second end is resiliently movable with respect to the first member “to absorb relative vibration between the male and female members.”

Similarly, independent claim 12 recites a combination of features including “providing a first one of the male and female members with a pair of first projections each extending parallel to the plane and each having a first end spaced from a second end, each first end being fixed to the first member, and each second end being resiliently movable with respect to the first member” such that “the first member is centered about the axis with respect to the second member” and “relative vibration between the first and second members is absorbed.”

Independent claim 15 recites a combination of features including “a pair of first projections extending from opposite sides of the male member and extending parallel to the plane,” and “the male member is centered about the axis and absorbs vibration with respect to the female member.”

Support for these combinations of features is found in Applicants’ specification as originally filed at page 6, lines 16-22, and in Applicants Figure 3. Thus, the resilient movement of the second ends provides self-centering and vibration reduction as discussed in Applicants’ specification as originally filed at page 1, lines 8-10, and page 2, lines 6-8.

In contrast to the Applicants’ claimed combinations of features, Mouissie shows in Figs. 3-4 an electrical connector including a cable connector 3, a built-in connector 4 and a locking

frame 16 securing the cable connector 1 to the built-in connector 4. The cable connector 3 includes a pair of locking lips 3, each having a boss 9 resiliently engaging respective recessed parts 23, 24 on the built-in connector 4 and recessed parts 26, 27 and transverse walls 25 on the locking frame 16. Pins (not numbered – see Figs. 3 and 4) are provided on one of the connectors 1, 4 and plug sockets 6 (Fig. 1) are provided on the other of the connectors 1, 4. See column 3, lines 53-58 of Mouissie. The pins (not numbered) are received in the plug sockets 6 (see e.g., Fig. 1).

Mouissie does not anticipate each and every feature of independent claims 1, 12 and 15. In particular, there is no teaching in Mouissie that supports the assertion in the Office Action that the locking lips 3 absorb vibration by virtue of their resiliency. Neither is there a teaching in Mouissie that the locking lips 3 center the cable connector 1 relative to the built-in connector 4. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) of independent claims 1, 12 and 15 be withdrawn for at least these reasons.

With regard to Manning, there is no teaching or suggestion that the key 84 overcomes the deficiencies of Mouissie. In particular, Manning states and shows that the key 84 assists in guiding the housing 23 into the receptacle 26 (column 8, lines 58-60 and Figs. 2, 3 and 3A-3C). Like Mouissie, there is no teaching or suggestion of a resiliently movable end that provides self-centering and vibration reduction, as recited in Applicants' independent claims. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) of independent claim 11 be withdrawn.

In conclusion, neither Mouissie nor Manning, whether considered individually or in combination, teach or suggest Applicants' resiliently movable second ends that provide self-centering and vibration reduction. For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections of the independent claims be withdrawn and independent claims 1, 11, 12, and 15 allowed.

Claims 2-10, 13, and 14 dependent from independent claims 1 and 12, and are therefore also allowable for at least the same reasons as the independent claims, as well as for the additionally recited features that further distinguish over the applied prior art. Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections of the dependent claims also be withdrawn, and that these claims be allowed.